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THE RELATION BETWEEN THE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE LIBRARIES AND THE
EXTENSION WORK OF THE COUNTRY AS DEVELOPING UNDER
THE SMITH-LEVER ACT

BY D. W. WORKING, *Agriculturist, United States Department of Agriculture; in Charge of
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The Smith-Lever Act provides for an extension of the work of the state agricultural colleges. The agricultural college is not to be supplanted in any of its proper undertakings, but is given an additional source of strength and of revenue and a new commandment to work among country people by a particular educational method. It is hardly fair to say that the agricultural college has been given a new motive; but it is fair to say that the Smith-Lever Act has already given every one of the agricultural colleges an enlarged vision of its opportunity. For a half-century or more American agricultural colleges have been trying to occupy the great field of opportunity opened to them by the original Morrill Act. Already they have occupied the strategic positions. They have laid the foundations of an agricultural science; they are developing a workable system of teaching; they are commanding the respect of other institutions of higher education; they are winning the confidence of the people to whom they make their direct appeal; and now they are given the means and the order to reach out from their strategic positions and to occupy the entire field of agricultural education. The opportunity is greater than any of us have realized. It appeals to our imaginations; it challenges us to our highest endeavors.

When a new task is thrust upon an established institution, at once there is an insistent call for constructive thinking. In the case of the problem before us, there is demand for a careful analysis of the situation presented to the agricultural colleges. A new burden has been placed upon them; a new and enlarging endowment has been provided for a definite kind of service; and, with the increased burden and the increasing revenues, there has

come also a new and gratifying recognition of the ability and the willingness of these institutions to extend their teaching services from the college itself to the remotest country hamlet, schoolhouse, and farmstead.

To think clearly on the problem of the relation between the agricultural college library and the extension work now developing under the terms and with the financial support of the Smith-Lever Act, it is needful to realize that this extension work is a teaching service of the college itself; it is the college finding its full opportunity, attacking the whole of its task, and no longer content with trying to do the easy inside work of agricultural education. It is needful also to realize that the college library is a very essential part of the college. We cannot overestimate the importance of the library. In it are arranged for use all of the written knowledge which has been accumulated through the ages. It contains food for students, working equipment for scholars and teachers, and the cunning implements by which investigators pry into the secrets of nature. Best of all, the well organized library contains that good Genius of the inquiring student—the librarian. The librarian, as custodian of the treasures of his house of books, gathers food for students in order that students may feed thereon and grow in knowledge and wisdom and power for service; he accumulates the tools which the master workmen in teaching and research so much need, but only to lend them for use in the increase of knowledge and the making of men and women who shall become more faithful and effective workers in the various useful occupations of life. So the work of the college depends very largely upon the librarian; so also the work of

the extension service of the college must depend upon the librarian. If we in the extension service are to accomplish the mission on which we are sent, we shall succeed because of the help of the librarian—largely through carrying to the people of the country the teaching material which the librarian gathers, selects, sifts, and places in our hands to carry to the people.

Thus far, for the most part, we have had both teacher and student within the college walls, and it has been a comparatively simple matter for the teacher to tell his students what to read and for the librarian to place the books in the hands of the learner. It has been easy for the student to learn something of the resources of the library and to make use of them in his search for knowledge. "Oh, for a book!" exclaims the college student,—and it is placed in his hands by the willing librarian. "Oh, for a book!" cries the boy or girl on the farm,—but there is no answer to the cry. "Oh, for the book that will answer this question!" cries the farmer in his field and the woman in kitchen or nursery,—but there is no ready librarian to meet the need. Thus it has been; thus it is today; but thus it is not to be in the near future when the plans on which your minds are working shall have been developed into a present service reaching to the remotest country community and to the last man on the loneliest farm.

The extension teacher lives far from the college, and cannot call his students together for study or recitation. At best, he can meet only a small proportion of them, and these only occasionally. Usually, he must meet his students by the roadside, in fields and orchards, in country homes, or at schoolhouse gatherings. The extension teacher is a traveling missionary of agricultural education: to reach all of the people to whom he is sent, he must organize them and start them on the road to self-help, which means self-teaching under leadership. Do you see that it is our task to organize these people and

to show them the vision of service which you librarians can render them through books?

A very large share of the extension teachers employed under the provisions of the Smith-Lever Act are known as county agents, or agriculturists. They are the teaching agents of the state college of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture. More than a thousand of these men are now working in single counties or small groups of counties; and it is probable that the number will be doubled within five years. The service they are giving is new, but it is a real service, and we are able to prove that it more than pays its way when measured by the exacting dollar-standard, to say nothing of its educational and social values. These men are developing into a new type of teacher of agriculture. They are men of special training and special adaptability, sent to be fellow-students with farmers as well as to be teachers of farmers. They are college teachers with field assignments. It is their special task to bring to the people of the near and remote parts of their counties the newest results of scientific investigations that apply in the particular regions and to connect the new teachings with the approved practice of the best farmers. Doing this teaching service to mature men, as well as to immature persons, the extension worker must be sure-footed in his thinking and teaching, and he needs every help which librarians can give by means of books and other printed matter and all of the devices that may be used to make the printed page acceptable and serviceable to the people with whom the county agent works.

It is hardly necessary to say that these county agriculturists and other extension teachers are more than willing to use libraries and librarians in their teaching work. College trained men and women may be trusted to give the librarian a good name for usefulness to those in search of knowledge; so it is quite safe to say to you librarians that extension

workers everywhere are more than pleased to have you take up so promptly the important subject now under consideration. It should be clear to every librarian that the extension teacher needs to make the largest possible use of library facilities and service. More than any other teacher, he will need to depend on books, for books must do most of his teaching for him. To the extent that you can adapt your methods to his needs and put big and little bits of helpful print into the hands of his widely scattered students, to that extent will you be helping your several colleges to make the work of the extension teachers directly and genuinely helpful. When you have fully realized that the extension service of your college is the college itself working among the people outside the cities and towns, you will see as we see that your library has the same opportunity to help the extension teachers as to help other college teachers: that it has the same duty and privilege to work with and for the people of the country that it has been enjoying in its work with and for the students registered at the college.

It may not be amiss to emphasize the thought of co-operation which underlies the Smith-Lever Act. The money appropriated by this Act is provided for co-operative agricultural extension. The agricultural college of each state is the active partner, the Department of Agriculture the consulting partner. Neither can work without the other. Congress appropriates the money for the use of the colleges under certain very definite conditions, which can be met only as college and department work together in the co-operative spirit and according to prescribed methods. Thus we have a National Agricultural Extension Service, endowed by nation and state and conducted directly by the state agricultural college according to a general plan outlined by Congress and detailed working plans agreed upon by the college and the secretary of agriculture. The entire service provided for promises to be of great use to the

people of the country, with a permanence of support and a steadiness of policy that could hardly be expected if the work were entirely dependent upon state support.

The library is a collection of books and other printed matter—material to be used by seekers after knowledge and ideas. The librarian is one who knows his library and who knows how to make its resources available to those who should use it. For most of us, the library is not very helpful without the librarian: sometimes it is even forbidding or baffling. The librarian does at least two things for his public: he shows the inquirer how to make direct personal use of the library itself; and he puts into the student's hands the particular book or magazine or newspaper immediately needed, even pointing out the page and paragraph where helpful information is to be found. In the extension field, we shall expect the same service from the librarian. Our difficulty just now is to find out just how the thing is to be done.

In the college, the teacher tells the librarian that his students are interested in a particular subject at a particular time,—and the librarian assembles the right books in convenient places for use. In our extension work we shall probably have to follow the same method. Why may not the county agent tell the librarian that his farmers are interested in cabbage-growing at a certain date and in killing cabbage worms at a certain later date, and do so with confidence that the right kind of printed matter will be assembled and sent at the right time to the persons who need instruction? Of course this is easier said than done. But when all of the extension workers go into conference with the library staff to consider the needs of the farmers and to canvass the resources of the library, we may be sure that workable plans will be thought out.

. . . Our department and every experiment station has given away tens of thousands of publications that have gone to waste because they have told too much

or because they were received too soon or too late. It is worth considering if it might not be advisable to devise a carefully indexed filing system for use by every patron of the extension library you are planning to develop. An index to Farmers' Bulletins or other publications is a good thing; but if most of the publications have been mislaid because of the lack of a filing device, the index will large-

ly fail of its purpose. If a few librarians of an inventive turn of mind will work out systems of classifying and filing bulletins, leaflets, and newspaper clippings, and then have a simple and inexpensive filing-case put on the market, it may be that we shall soon find that our publications will be of much greater use because they can be found when they are especially needed.

RELATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND EXPERIMENT STATION LIBRARIES TO THE LIBRARY OF THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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In its general relations with the land grant colleges and experiment stations, the Federal Department of Agriculture has been represented by the Office of Experiment Stations, which, as a central agency established for their especial benefit, has aided them in a variety of ways and has sought to promote co-operation between them and the Department of Agriculture in their various undertakings. By the agricultural appropriation act for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1915, the name of the Office of Experiment Stations was changed to States Relations Service and its activities extended. This name indicates more clearly the functions of the office and is striking proof of the importance attached to co-operation between the states and the Federal government in the promotion of agriculture. Through the Association of the American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, and the Office of Experiment Stations, the various state experiment stations as well as the colleges with which they are connected, are brought together so as to form with the Federal Department of Agriculture a national system of agricultural education and research which is said to be the most complete in the world. There is, however, one link lacking in this system,—namely, the libraries, which have taken little part

in the work of co-operation among these institutions. That a closer relationship and greater co-operation between the library of the national Department of Agriculture and the libraries of the state agricultural colleges and experiment stations would be productive of good results will scarcely be denied. The establishment of the Agricultural Libraries Section of the American Library Association has been a step toward bringing about greater co-operation by affording an opportunity for the discussion of problems common to agricultural libraries.

In presenting to the section a paper on the subject of the relation of the libraries of the agricultural colleges and experiment stations to the library of the Federal Department of Agriculture, the object has been to explain the general policy of the library of the department in this connection, in the hope that by making better known its desire to be of service to other institutions, its opportunities for usefulness may be increased. As the national agricultural library connected with the national institution for agricultural research, the library of the Department of Agriculture should, it is believed, extend its services as far as possible to the investigators in agricultural science throughout the country. Land grant colleges and experi-